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Expulsions hardly dent KGB U.S. spy network

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WASHINGTON — The expulsion of 11 top-level Soviet intelligence operatives attached to the Soviet UN mission has caused only minor damage to the most important KGB network in the world, according to U.S. intelligence experts.

U.S. officials said the entire KGB and GRU (military intelligence) leadership in New York left the country earlier this week.

The spies were the last of the 25 UN diplomats named in the Reagan administration's expulsion order last month.

While the leadership in New York is gone, experts say the basic intelligence network of the KGB and its sister service, the GRU, remains in place and continues to conduct espionage operations.

The 25 UN diplomats will be replaced by other top KGB operatives soon.

In the meantime, KGB operatives attached to the UN are probably taking their orders from high-ranking agents attached to the U.S. embassy in Washington until replacements can be made, experts say.

"This order is really penny-ante stuff," said Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and former UN ambassador. Soviet spying in New York, he said, "remains a serious problem."

Moynihan said that the expulsion order caused no disruption in the considerable KGB spy network attached to the UN Secretariat.

Nor did it seriously damage the extensive electronic eavesdropping operations on U.S. citizens and businesses being conducted from the Soviet UN mission and diplomatic compound in Riverdale, he said.

Moynihan disclosed that the U.S. intelligence community estimates there at least 500 KGB and GRU agents in the U.S. operating under various covers in the U.S.